

Statement on the 80th Anniversary of the Birth of Andrei Sakharov

May 21, 2001

Today we honor the memory of Andrei Sakharov on the 80th anniversary of his birth. Throughout his life, Andrei Sakharov served as a beacon of hope and inspiration for those who value peace and freedom, both in his native Russia and around the world. A gifted nuclear physicist, he became a powerful advocate for nuclear nonproliferation. Awarded his country's highest honors, he became best known for standing up to Soviet totalitarianism and becoming a powerful advocate for basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.

He did so at great personal cost. He endured prolonged harassment and forced internal exile in Gorky, where he was cut off from friends and family. But throughout his trials, Andrei Sakharov never wavered in his "fearless personal commitment in upholding the fundamental principles for peace"—a fact recognized by his Nobel Peace Prize citation in 1975. After he was allowed to return to public life, Sakharov became a prominent voice of democratic opposition and was elected to the Congress of People's Deputies, the Soviet Union's first democratically chosen body.

On today's anniversary, it is important for the international community to reflect on the great contributions Andrei Sakharov made to help advance the freedoms that all peoples of the world should rightfully enjoy. Unfortunately, too many people in too many parts of the world today do not enjoy these basic freedoms, and those who speak out on behalf of freedom are too often jailed, tortured, or murdered. Let us resolve to honor Andrei Sakharov's memory by continuing the struggle against these injustices.

Remarks to the Hispanic Scholarship Fund

May 22, 2001

Thank you. Please be seated. That's a pretty tough act to follow. [Laughter] Sara and I were honored this Sunday at Notre Dame. We both received honorary degrees. She

probably deserved hers more than I deserved mine, but it was such an honor to be on the stage with her. What a wonderful lady, such a great inspiration, and somebody who has made a concerted effort to make a difference in people's lives. It's really what America is about, when you think about it. I mean, the true strength of this country are people like Sara, who are willing to say, "Let's get something done instead of sitting idly by and looking at depressing statistics, the statistic that not enough of our Hispanic youngsters are going to institutions of higher learning. Let's get something done about it, instead of hoping somebody else will pick up the initiative and get it done." Sara said, "I'm going to do it." And I want to thank you all for joining and supporting the Hispanic Scholarship Fund. It is important for our Nation's future that this fund be whole and active and fully funded.

I want to thank my friend Rudy Beserra for being here today, as well. Rudy—Mr. Chairman, it's good to see you, sir. And I understand that you will be hearing from Margaret LaMontagne after I say a few words.

Access is incredibly important. We must work as a society to extend the American Dream to *todos*—to everybody. Now, it starts with making sure youngsters understand that dream is available. And all of us need to help on making sure people understand the dream is available and the benefits of working hard to achieve the dream.

It also starts with making sure our public schools educate children. I would bet—I haven't seen any studies on this, but I would fully suspect that if a child is illiterate, relative to his or her classmates, it diminishes hope. And the dream that we all hope for, higher education, becomes smaller in the eyes of that child. If a person doesn't have the capacity that we all want that person to have, I suspect hope is in the far-distant future, if at all.

And so first things first means having an education system that provides hope by educating children, not a system that looks at hard-to-educate children, perhaps the *niños* of the first generation whose parents may not speak English, and say, "Oh, it's the easiest route to take, is just move them through the

school system. The easiest thing for us to do is not to focus on each child but just move them through. If they're 12, we'll put everybody here. If they're 16, everybody goes there. And if they happen to learn to read, fine." That attitude is going to change. It's going to change by starting to ask the question around this country: What do you know? Do you know what you're supposed to know? And if you don't know what you're supposed to know, we as a society will come together to make sure you do early, before it's too late.

What Margaret will discuss with you is the bill that we've proposed here in Congress that lays out some clear principles about public education. One is, we ought to expect high standards. That means when people stand in front of a classroom full of Latino children, they expect the best. They know what all of us know, particularly, Sara knows: that if you expect the best, you get good results. If you say, "Well, certain kids can't learn; it's too hard to teach them to speak English"—if you lower the bar, we get lousy results. And every child deserves better than that.

So, one of the principles is, setting high standards and realizing every child can learn; secondly, is to pass power out of Washington to provide maximum flexibility for local districts to be able to chart the path to excellence for their individual school districts; and thirdly, and the core of reform, as far as I'm concerned, is to have strong accountability measures inherent in the school systems.

To put it more directly, if you receive Federal money to help a child, you need to show us whether or not the children are learning. If you received help, you show. And if you're doing the job we want you to be doing, there will be plenty of praise. But if not, if not, if we find out children aren't learning, something else has to happen. We cannot continue to trap our children in schools that won't teach.

Now, we've got a couple of more initiatives that I think you'll find interesting. One is, I believe Head Start ought to be an early reading program, as well as the current strategy. And I think we ought to focus on making sure children are armed with the tools necessary to become good little readers. Unfortunately, not enough parents, or some par-

ents, don't read to their kids. And so the schoolchildren are behind. Well, if we're going to have an accountability system starting in the third grade, we need to make sure we've got enough early education to get those children up to the starting line with every other child. And so the budget I submitted outlines triple the amount of money available for reading programs. Inherent in the program is K-through-2 diagnostic testing, so that we know if little children have got reading deficiencies, we'll correct them. The whole core of reform is—I ask the question: Do our children know what they're supposed to know?

Now, there are some in our society who don't like the notion of accountability, who don't like to test. And I will resist that backward thinking with all my might, because I know what happens when you don't hold people accountable: Children are given up on. And that's not the American vision, as far as I'm concerned. I know it's not the American vision as far as you're concerned, as well.

In our budget, we also focus on ways to complement the work that you all do. We expand the monies available for Hispanic serving institutions. And as importantly, I think you'll find that—this fact will, I think, bring some joy to your heart—that we expand the Pell grants available for low income and middle income students. Expanding the Pell grants is not a way to replace what you all are doing; it's a way to complement what you're doing. We want the—I can't say it enough—we want the American experience to be available for every child. And Pell grants is a good way to encourage access to higher education.

We expand the TRIO program in my budget. It's a program aimed at focusing on keeping children in school. We believe in education savings accounts. We give parents a tax incentive to save. And as I mentioned before, we're focused on making sure that the public schools do their job.

I am fixing to go talk to another group of Latino leaders about the Faith-Based Initiative, and I want to just share some thoughts with you about that. It's what I talked about when I was at Notre Dame, and it ties hand in hand with what we're trying to do.

On the one hand, we'll educate. On the other hand, we must inspire. And governments aren't very good at inspiring. We're kind of bureaucracies. The way to inspire a child is to convince somebody to be a mentor. The way to inspire somebody about America and its future and hope is for somebody to put an arm around a child and say, "I love you a lot. And America is meant for you, as well as anybody else."

So we're talking about education today, but there's a different kind of education that our society must do, as well, and that's the education of helping somebody feel wanted.

First, our country must recognize there are some who are being left behind, and we've got to deal with it. That means more budgets, but it also means standing on the side of faith-based institutions who exist because they've heard the call to love a neighbor like they would like to be loved themselves and rally the great compassion of America.

I called on corporate America when I was at Notre Dame to do its job. I welcome corporate America here, doing your job by providing these scholarships. It's in your best interest to do so. It's also in our Nation's best interest that corporate America support faith-based programs that teach people love and compassion and hope.

Our country is a fabulous country. It is, mainly, because the people are so great. And our country is richer because of the Hispanic influence. I know; I came from a State that has a tremendous Hispanic influence. And I know I shouldn't say this: I happen to think it's the greatest State of all States, but partly because of our history and tradition and relationships in the Hispanic community.

We are one Nation under God, which means every child—every child—should be viewed as a precious individual. Every child should be educated, and no child should be left behind. It is my honor to help kick off your conference. I can't thank you enough for what you do. For those generous souls who have contributed, thanks from the bottom of our Nation's heart. Keep doing it. And for Sara, thank you very much for having me a chance to come by.

God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. in the Indian Treaty Room in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Sara Martinez Tucker, president and chief executive officer, and Rudy M. Beserra, chairman, board of directors, Hispanic Scholarship Fund.

Remarks to Leaders of Hispanic Faith-Based Organizations

May 22, 2001

Thank you, all. I now know why he's a Baptist preacher. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, Luis, and thank you, Jesse, and thank you all for coming. Before I say a few remarks, I want to introduce some folks. I appreciate so very much the Members from the United States Congress who are here: Ileana and Lincoln and Henry from the great State of Texas. Thank you so much for being here. It's a sign of unity that you're here, and I look forward to working with you to get the legislation through.

I reached into Philadelphia to ask a man to run the Office of the Faith-Based Initiative. Fortunately, John DiIulio, who is one of the advanced thinkers about how to help people, how the Nation should eradicate poverty, has joined my staff. What we're about to talk about is an incredibly serious effort to make sure that the American promise extends its reach in every neighborhood. And John is leading the office, and for that I am most grateful, John. Thank you very much. And Lisa Trevino Cummins is helping John, as well.

This is an important part of my administration, because I want the great hope of America to be existent in every household in our country. I worry about a society that could become divided between those who have and those who don't. I'm concerned about the fact that certain children are being left behind in America.

My vision includes everybody. It's described as compassionate conservatism, but I emphasize the compassion. The problem is Government is not a very compassionate organization. We can fund—and we should—budgets; there is a lot of talk about budgets. We've submitted budgets that increase spending on social services. We've got